

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

For the

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF EXISTING STORAGE BARN INTO A SINGLE RESIDENTIAL DWELLING

At

LORDS FARM BARN, QUEEN STREET, EYNHAM

INTRODUCTION

This Planning, Design and Access Statement accompanies a planning application to convert a traditional stone barn, located adjacent to Lords Farmhouse on Queen Street into a two-bedroom dwelling.

The barn is Grade II Listed and is located within the Eynsham Conservation Area. According to the Environment Agency's flood maps, the site lies within Flood Zone 1.

Pre-application discussions have taken place with Officers at West Oxfordshire District Council, with supportive feedback being received to the principle of converting the existing building into a residential use.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

Eynsham is the 4th largest settlement within West Oxfordshire District. It is located approximately 6 miles north west of Oxford and 6 miles east of Witney. It is a sustainable settlement with a wide range of facilities, including a range of shops, post office, services such as doctor's surgery, dentist and both primary and secondary schools.

The village is also well served by public transport and is served by the S1 service which runs between Oxford and Carterton, running every 20 minutes throughout the day and evening.

The barn itself is located on Queen Street, Eynsham. It adjoins Lords Farmhouse, which is located on the junction of Queens Lane and Oxford Road. The evolution and history of the farmstead is set out in details within the accompanying Heritage Report prepared by Worlledge Associates.

The barn building is a relatively simple three bay building, attached to the main farmhouse, with a large central door and no other openings on its western elevation facing out onto Queen Street. The building is constructed out of limestone rubble with a hipped Stonesfield stone slate roof.

An external storage area also exists towards the rear of the site, this is a detached two storey structure located within the rear 'garden' of the barn/farmhouse curtilage.

A residential dwelling is attached to the northern elevation of the barn, with this property's domestic curtilage/rear garden running along the site's northern boundary.

Queen Street itself is characterised by a mixture of residential dwellings types, with examples of traditional vernacular buildings alongside more recent modern infill development.

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The site is also located within the Eynsham Conservation Area. At present there is no specific Conservation Area Appraisal for this Conservation Area, so the more general policies regarding the preservation and conservation of such areas would apply.

The barn is currently vacant, with some ancillary storage used by the occupants of the neighbouring Lords Farmhouse.

THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to convert the existing barn into a two-bedroom dwelling, on two floors, and linking the existing barn and outbuilding. The design has been developed to retain as many of the original features within the building as possible.

The main elevation, facing out onto Queen Street, has no changes, and retains the existing large barn doors with no further openings proposed.

No parking is proposed as part of the development.

PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy and Guidance

Paragraph 11 within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear in that plans and development should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It states that for decision making purposes, local authorities should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Paragraph 78 goes on to say that planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

Chapter 16 goes on to deal with the issue of conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 193 within this chapter states that:

“193. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation.

Paragraph 196 then goes on to say that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 was formally adopted on the 27th September 2019 and sets out the overall planning framework for the District from 2011 to 2031.

Core Objection 1 (CO1) within the Plan, is to enable new development, of an appropriate scale and type in locations which will help improve the quality of life of local communities. Core Policy 2 (CO2) then goes on to say that new developments should be suitably located and well designed to protect and enhance the individual form, character and identity of towns and villages.

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Policy OS1 within the Plan, strongly echoes the guidance found within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF. Here it sets out a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Table 4b then goes on to identify Eynsham as a Rural Service Centre. A number of large new developments are proposed for the village, reinforcing the Council's approach that it is a sustainable location for new residential development.

Policy H1 sets out the amount and distribution of new housing across the district as a whole, and within this policy it confirms that 5,596 homes are proposed for the Eynsham-Woodstock sub-area. Within this figure allocation is made for 'windfall sites', such as the application site. Paragraph 5.37 goes on to say that windfall development should contribute to meeting housing needs in sustainable locations, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and, where appropriate, encourage the re-use of previously developed land.

Policy H2 goes on to confirm that new dwellings **will** be permitted in main service centres, rural service centres and villages, especially when they would constitute the redevelopment of previously developed land within the built-up area.

Policy EH9 addresses the issue of the historic environment, here the policy text echoes national guidance found within the NPPF, confirming that development proposals should conserve and/or enhance the special character, appearance and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire's historic environment, including the District's heritage assets. This includes listed buildings and conservation areas.

Policy EH10 then goes on to specifically address Conservation Areas and sets out a number of criteria for consideration when assessing proposals located within such protected areas. The policy text here states:

"Wherever possible the sympathetic restoration and re-use of buildings that make a positive contribution to the special interest, character and appearance of a Conservation Area will be encouraged, thereby preventing harm through the cumulative loss of features which are an asset to the Conservation Area."

Policy EH11 then goes on to provide the policy framework for applications affecting listed buildings.

Policy EH12 relates to traditional buildings and provides a number of criteria applications should consider when proposing the re-use or conversion of a traditional building.

West Oxfordshire Design Guide

The West Oxfordshire Design Guide was updated in 2016. It was formally adopted by the Council in April 2016, and is a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), and a material consideration in planning decisions.

It includes sections on conservation areas, listed buildings alongside more general design guidance, and has been used as a guide and reference when developing the application proposals.

MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that the following issues are the areas of consideration when assessing the application, each issue is discussed in more detail below:

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1. Principle of development
2. Proposed design and impact on surrounding heritage assets
3. Highways
4. Ecology

1. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 provides the policy framework against which all development proposals should be determined. S38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decision should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Within the Local Plan, Eynsham is identified as a Rural Service Centre. Policy H2 is a permissive policy and goes on to confirm that new residential development **will** be permitted in rural service centres, especially when they would constitute the redevelopment of previously developed land within the built-up area. In this instance, the application site constitutes the conversion of an existing building, within an established residential area, close to the village centre.

The application site clearly constitutes a sustainable location, with easy access to the village facilities and public transport options. As such the principle of the redevelopment of this building for residential purposes accords with the requirements of Policies CO1, OS1 and H2.

Policy EH12 also enables the conversion of traditional buildings into alternative uses provided the proposed works will not extensively alter the structure or features of interest. As the existing barn and stable building are Grade II listed, great care has been taken to ensure that the form and character of the original building will remain unaltered, and as such the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy EH12.

Based on the above it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable, and that there can be no in-principle objections to the proposed conversion of the existing building into a residential use.

2. PROPOSED DESIGN AND IMPACT ON SURROUNDING HERITAGE ASSETS

Pre-application discussions were held with officers from the Council, including Conservation Officers in May 2018 to discuss the most appropriate way to convert the existing building into a residential use.

Guidance received as part of this process, and more general guidance found within the Design Guide have been used to influence the overall design and rationale behind the proposals.

The main elevation, which fronts Queen Street, has been retained in its original form, with no alterations proposed. It was considered that this was a key feature of the proposed design to ensure that the form and the original character of the building remained unchanged when viewed from the public domain, and surrounding Conservation Area.

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The rear elevation will have more substantial changes, this includes the introduction of large glazed doors to replace the existing double doors to allow for natural lighting within the main barn itself. It is also proposed to add 2 conservation roof lights to the east slope of the barn to allow further natural light into the main habitable living space.

Changes to the internal space have been kept to a minimum, to ensure that the original fabric of the listed building is altered as minimally as possible. Where possible, all original features have been retained and incorporated into the proposed conversion. Some minor works proposed to the existing fabric include:

- Insulation to the western and eastern walls, leaving the northern and southern walls as existing (rubble stone with limewash),
- Secondary glazing to window in the barn to improve energy efficiency,
- Replace the existing more modern concrete floor with an insulated floor finished in timber boards,
- Propose a porch structure inside of the existing barn doors to provide a better entrance to the barn once off the public footpath and helping create an air-tight entrance for occupants,
- Adding insulation at rafter levels, and
- Addition of a timber staircase for access to mezzanine level (proposed bedroom), partition walls to create bathroom, storage and utility room.

Works are also proposed to the existing stable building, although this is not visible within the public domain, as located within the courtyard area to the rear, changes here have again been kept to a minimum to ensure that the original character and appearance of the building remains.

- The external elevations will remain largely unaltered. Repair work is required to the stonework, but this will be sympathetically done, respecting the traditional methods and materials used in the original construction of the building.
- Conservation rooflights are proposed to the east slope of the roof,
- Internally work will be carried out to restore the building and bring it back into a viable use, this includes the addition of a new spiral staircase to access the mezzanine level, replacement windows where required and a partition wall at ground floor level to create a bathroom.

The new construction element for the proposals constitutes a single storey link building between the main barn and the stable building to the rear. A new opening is proposed in the rear barn wall to create an access to the new building and stable. Large elements of glazing are proposed to provide natural light and create a high standard of amenity for occupiers.

An area of private amenity space is provided towards the rear of the dwelling, this is sufficient in size to provide enough space to also provide space for bin storage and bicycle storage for occupants.

3. ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS

The existing barn sits alongside the main Lords Farmhouse and is used for storage purposes. It is not currently used for the storage or parking of vehicles.

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Queen Street provided unrestricted on street parking for residents, as the majority of dwellings along this street do not benefit from on -plot parking provision.

A number of spaces also exist along the unrestricted High Street and Oxford Road, all of which are within a short walking distance of the proposed new dwelling.

The proposed conversion of the existing building into a residential use complies with the overarching principles found within adopted Local Plan policy T1. Here it states that priority should be given to locating new development in areas with convenient access to a good range of services and facilities and where the need to travel by private car can be minimised. In this instance, it is considered that the site is located within a highly sustainable location, with easy access to Eynsham's services and facilities in addition to a regular bus service. As such, occupants of the proposed new dwelling will not be solely reliant of use of the private car.

Oxfordshire County Council have a 'Transport for New Developments – Parking Standards for New Residential Developments' Guidance document published in December 2011 and this sets out the standards for parking provision within the District.

Here it sets out the 'maximum' level of parking provision, with no minimum level specified. Here it confirms that where no allocated spaces are proposed as part of a development, a maximum of 1.4 unallocated spaces should be provided.

In this instance, therefore it is considered that one unallocated space, most likely located along Queen Street, will be required to absorb the impact of the likely level of parking provision generated by the new development. Whilst the unrestricted parking available along the adjoining roads is outside of the occupant's control, it is considered that the current level of parking has sufficient space to be able to comfortably accommodate one additional vehicle.

As such the proposed conversion of the building into a residential use will have no detrimental impact on the adjoining road network and complies with the general requirements of Policy T1.

4. IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

A full Heritage Report of Significance and Heritage Impact Assessment have been produced by Worlledge Associates and have been submitted as part of the supporting application documentation.

There is no need to repeat the conclusions of the report in full here, but in summary the assessment concludes that the proposals will cause no harm to the identified heritage significance of the Lords Farmhouse, barn and stable. It will add a further layer to its historical and architectural development and encourage continued investment in its long-term sustainable conservation of these buildings.

5. ECOLOGY

A Phase 1 Ecology Survey has been carried out on the buildings. The report concludes that there is evidence of the potential presence of bats at the site. No other protected species were identified as being likely to be found at the site.

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It is therefore hoped that subject to all other matters be considered acceptable, a condition could be attached to any permission to require the submission of more detailed information regarding the protection of bats during the redevelopment process.

CONCLUSIONS

This application seeks planning and listed building consent for the proposed conversion of an existing redundant barn into a single residential dwelling.

The existing barn is located on Queen Street, within walking distance of all the facilities and services Eynsham has to offer, including a regular bus service to Oxford and Carterton. It is therefore considered to be a highly sustainable site and one that is appropriate for additional residential development.

Core principles running throughout the NPPF, as set out in paragraph 11 make it clear that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 78 goes on to say that local planning policies should encourage and identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

It is considered that the proposed conversion of the existing redundant building makes efficient use of an existing vacant building, within the built-up limits of the settlement, thereby delivering housing in a sustainable location in accordance with both local and national planning policy guidance.

The proposed works to the existing barn and associated outbuilding has been carefully considered to ensure that the original character and appearance of the Grade II listed building will remain largely unchanged, and it will continue to make a positive contribution to the overall character and appearance of the surrounding Conservation Area.

A full Heritage Impact Assessment has been carried out and this concludes that there will be no detrimental harm to the heritage assets, namely the listed building itself and the surrounding conservation area. In fact, the proposed works will result in the restoration of an existing protected building, bringing it back into a viable use that will ensure its long-term protection.

Whilst no on-site parking provision is provided as part of the scheme, it is considered that due to the availability of unrestricted on road parking surrounding the site, and the dwellings close proximity to frequent public transport links in this instance, the conversion of the building into a two bedroom without parking still achieves the aims of the relevant policies within the adopted Local Plan and as such can be considered acceptable in highways terms.

Overall therefore, the development is considered to be acceptable when considered against both the local and national planning policy framework and would result in the delivery of additional housing in a highly sustainable location whilst also preserving and maintaining the overall character and appearance of a designated heritage asset.